In The Morning, When I Rise

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In The Morning, When I Rise

by Zigzagwanderer

Summary

Will and Hannibal survived the Fall, and have started living together on Vakkrehejm, a tiny island in the chilly Baltic sea.
They are pretending to be a married couple, Thom and Eirik Buckley.
(This possibly takes place after 'The White Arcades' and before 'Dreams are like Water', which is the St Valentine's Day Fic!!.)
Just want to say thank you again to anyone who reads my stories. You're all very kind to do so.
xxxxhugsxxxx

Chapter one

The swan is dead by dawn. The window-pane that it struck is snowflaked with a spiralling scar that draws blood when Hannibal slides his finger towards its crooking heart.

Speculatively. To see if it can continue to keep the outside world out.

He wonders if it should. Liminality, after all, is precious, precisely because it is not made to last.

And they have been on opposing sides of the ice for so long, imperfectly imbalanced, falling, and at the same time, fearing falling through, that it is hard to know what will happen now that they tread the same slippery surface.

Whether such transparency can bear the true weight of two.

“Hey,” Will reaches forward. “Stop that.”

Words come softly from his mouth since the season has smothered them in silence. He rids himself of the imperative as if it was an apology, and replaces it with Hannibal’s dripping fingertip instead.

Sucks and swallows, because red has lately become so rare.

The sky above the straits is grey pearl if it is any colour at all, and the bergs that rub and moan at Vakkrehejm’s shores are sapphires when they are not diamonds.

The land has been caped and corseted, and all in bridal silks.

Hannibal looks at Will.

Will sucks a little harder.

Hannibal takes off Will’s glasses and they sink into the bright run of light that spills down the hallway, between the shored banks of beech skirting.

“Must be shards all over the place,” Will murmurs, pressing his tailbone down on Hannibal nonetheless. “It was a hell of a birdstrike.”

“Indeed.” Hannibal has the carcase stowed in the kitchen. “So, here.” He pulls Will further across him. “I do not wish you to be damaged.”

Will settles, balancing on his knees to open their clothing wider. His touch drifts. Wrists tucked tight and elbows winging out. An endlessly beguiling lapful, in all of its everyday awkwardness.

“I’m not sure I can. Again. So soon.” Will winds himself about Hannibal, sighing and sinuous, cartilage arching; his entire body an invitation to mate.

Hannibal grazes Will's pale neck with his nails. "Shall we find out together?"

Will nods. His body should be sore, but it isn't.

It is hungry, even in their enforced hibernation.

"Jesus." Will shuts his eyes and shivers, a distinct draft plucking at their uncovered skin.

So very cold. So very hot.

He can hear their wetness, and licks it, blindly, from his palms. "You smell so good. So goddamn…dirty."

Hannibal marvels at their mess, too. He is sweet with saliva and sweat. Will's pyjamas are still saturated down one seam, and the hair between his legs is twice-tacky, syrupped with seed.

Will scrapes through his short, scalped feathers. Hannibal hasn't asked him to grow back his curls, but, of course, he is doing just that.

"May need you to…uh…help…"

Hannibal obligingly spits upon his thumb.

Will is dizzy. Lacking sleep. His lips are cracked.

Ice rattles across the roof of their little white house.

The weather is worsening. The wolfskin of winter ripples down from the north. The entire archipelago is sheathed in it.

"Hips forward, then." Hannibal bites around Will's throat, hard spikes of sensation needling Will out of his clouding state of drowsy pleasure. "I have you."

"Christ, Hannibal." Will screws up his face. His back bends. "Holy God. You have me. You do."

The storm tongues sloppily at the opening. It would split the pane apart, if it could.

There are noises of frustration, of forcing.

"Say it again." Will begins to speak in gusts. Hannibal does not answer, except to work himself in deeper and flex his knuckle more frequently. His fringe sticks to Will's puckered cheek. "Say that thing you said," Will warns. "Or I'll quote Cupitt at you for the rest of the morning."

They kiss on each twisting upbeat.

Hannibal looks to see that Will is smiling; flushed and dark and selfish.

Using his lashes to cage, and to scourge.

“You wish to discuss non-realism?”

“Not quite.”

“The abandonment of the concept of an afterlife?”

“God. God. Yes. No. You’re getting…warmer.”

Hannibal puts his eloquence to Will’s ear. “You want me to say that fucking you with my hands is all the heaven I will ever require?”

“Yeah.” Will covers Hannibal in himself. Himself in Hannibal. “I do. I do want you to say stuff like that. All of the time.”

Sharp things glitter as glass gives way.

They don’t glance anywhere but at each another.

Certainly not at the annihilated window, or the blizzard that bounds in, baying, above their heads.

Hannibal has snow and shiny slivers on his shoulders. His cheekbone is cut.

Will puts his chin somewhere comfortable and yawns.

“I’d better get that repaired. Walk the dogs. Then we can go back to bed.”

Hail snarls against the Elias Martin watercolour. Will hates it and hopes that it does not survive.

“No. There are preparations to make. Rituals to be observed.”

“Those vodka plum pastries, right?”

“Among other delicacies.”

“By which you mean that we’re having swan for dinner.”

“Of course.” Hannibal helps Will to his feet. “When something magnificent becomes mine, whether by happenstance or intention, I treasure it in the most appropriate way possible.”

Will does not disagree.

“Merry Christmas, Hannibal.”

“Merry Christmas, Will.”

And downstairs, Sandy and Perkunas bark for their breakfast.

Chapter 2

Will stutters clear off the roof.

Tacks and cleats scattershot the snow; the unblemished blanketing studded with tools and traitorous slates.

Will limps in by the back door, cursing, and wipes a sullen string of blood from the inside of his cheek onto his soaked trouser leg.

Perkunas is hushed with a command; the mighty war-dog puddles himself in front of the green-red fire, having witnessed, after all, far worse trauma than scrapes sported by stupid men who fall into bushes.

Sandy, however, dances fretfully through the archway to fetch Hannibal.

Nothing in the archipelago could stop him.

Will understands the impulse *perfectly*.

Yet, he is prickling with more than just the tusk-marks of woolly willow.

His very bones are ringing.

And memory tolls within; a hollow refrain. There is a trail of moss and rusty snow behind him, but Will is pretty sure that what he stinks of is not leaf-rot, but idiocy, and the still-clinging spectre of seaweed.

“I’m fine,” he mutters, staggering right into Hannibal while wrestling off his other hobnail. “It was hardly even a storey off the ground. I’ve gone a lot further, vertically speaking...”

He stops, unable to face the concern facing him, but neither can he keep in the grunt of pain as he bounces on his ankle. “Look, I don’t need to be scolded right now, ok?”

Hannibal turns smartly enough to scorch the hearthrug, and leaves the room.

The muddy footwear mutinies haphazardly into the fancy liquor cabinet that Will has only just finished restoring.

“Goddamn.”

He throws his hat after the misfired boot.

Sandy whines somewhere, out in the corridor.

“*Goddamn*.”

He drops down, defeated, expecting a wearying day of polite reproof and condescension.

Instead, Hannibal returns immediately, to kneel by the armchair.

“Sip.” He offers an innocent little glass tankard. “I believe alcohol is a tried and tested sticking plaster for both pain and wounded pride.”

Will blinks slowly through the berried steam.

Hannibal’s hair is awry.

He has his three top buttons undone.

A dishcloth slung over one shoulder.

There is juice or some other crimson on his forearms.

A languorous cello piece plays on the gramophone and Hannibal kind of hums with it, absently, because he is intent on something else more important.

Will takes a breath and swallows the Atlantic right back down and frowns a little at how easy it is, to feel this way.

Music. Woodsmoke. A monster drenched in cinnamon sugar.

“So,” he rubs at his glasses. “Safety lecture?”

“No. It would be absurd. Are you injured?”

Will shakes his head and then wishes he’d said yes.

“Shutters should hold ‘til I can get to Ernesta’s. For new glazing.”

“Thank you for your efforts. But please remember that I would rather reside with you, whole, in a shack full of broken windows, than in an immaculate palace that has cost me your life.”

And then he kisses Will, hard.

Begins to ease Will out of his ruined clothes. “You have time to finish your medicine before we dine. There is hot water for a bath...”

“…with you.” It comes out shakier than Will intends. “I want you to come upstairs with me.”

“Now?”

“Now.”

The swan is left to continue its journey through hickory hellfire alone.

The hallway is darker.

The bathroom and bedroom both still, and quiet.

Will is getting hard and his lower lip begs softly as he drags it across Hannibal's collarbone.

"Don't think that this is…some cockamamy affirmation. I am fine…Heights and whatever are fine. It's not a thing."

He holds Hannibal, bruisingly, and shuffles him onto the bed.

Hannibal inspects what is his. "We are ever at the mercy of physics. It was simply a lack of traction. A surfeit of gravity."

"Yeah."

He rubs the rounding of Will's shoulders with both of his thumbs. Pushes him backwards to fall again.

"The shock will pass. Your body is simply responding to peril."

"I'm surprised I still have the capacity to do that."

"I am not. Your body continually astonishes me."

"Christ." Will gives Hannibal a space at his side. "Come here."

But Hannibal pauses and eases Will's legs back instead. He is purposeful, and careful not to break contact even once, as he skirts Will's sole and heel, and strokes up and along his calf and thigh, his trailing breath uneven, his lips closed and chaste, as they press lower, and lower, and lower again.

Will frets the coverlet with his spine when Hannibal parts him wide.

"I…I…haven't ever…had…that."

"I would very much like to, Will." Hannibal demonstrates again, delicately. "There is nothing of you that I would not devour."

His voice turns slow, and starving. "Allow me the privilege?"

Hannibal waits, hunched and blocking out the lamplight spilling in from the stairwell. Blocking out the light from the stars and the moon and the sun.

"Fine."

The intimacy of it is actually a comfort.

To have a strong, wet muscle there. To have all vulnerability indelibly overwritten in scalding, cursive spit.

To have the security of sharp teeth, telling Will he is something to be guarded, to be treasured, even the parts of him that are unspoken of, and unfavoured.

“Fucking…Jesus. Yes.”

It is a long, achingly endless kiss, and really, no more exposing than being pared with a knife.

No more exposing than being *seen*.

And the spiteful sounds of the ocean were never so subverted, so slippery in Will’s ears, and he finds that he cannot go on hating the surf and the spray and the salt, when this is what drowning is.

“I want you to hold me too.” Will searches blindly for the reassurance of Hannibal’s hand. “Hold me while you eat me alive.”

He entrusts his half-hardness entirely to Hannibal, so that he can just let the waves have him, can just thrash and float atop the bedsheets, can just strand Hannibal’s damp, fine hair through his fingers.

And Hannibal is left to find the tempo of it, the counterpoint of inside to outside, deeps to shallows. Which he does, humming again, intent again. Hooking and licking like the tide lapping at the edges of the world.

Moving, in the end, so that he can puts his hand where his mouth was, and replace his hand with his mouth.

There is a sloppy, inexorable precision about things then, that is beyond their control, beyond their magnificent, combined intellect; Will fucked and fucking, hungry as hell, and still mad at himself, and with his possibly fractured foot kicking where Hannibal has just recovered from abdominal surgery.

They are ridiculously happy.

Will turns his head as Hannibal drinks him down.

There are no curtains drawn on Vakkrehejm. No veils or obfuscations.

There is just water, all around them. And the nearest islets are sometimes bleak, sometimes lost in fog, always bearing scars of their wintry pasts.

But they are no less beloved for being so, and no less cosseted and held tight, never to be surrendered, by the black-hearted, brilliant, archipelagic sea.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

> (Ernesta runs the general store on another island in the archipelago. Inspector Daniel Linna is not Will's favourite person, as he is kind of in love with Hannibal.)

Midnight crusts Vakkrehejm in dark sugars.

Hannibal throws the meat down on the dockside. It is burnt, and also begrudged; the carrion of the kingdom may belong to the otters by right, but now there is to be no dinner for Will.

Once, the ruination of such a ritual would have mattered.

But that was before the little white house was right in front of him, with its side-door wide open, spilling caramel upon the snow-sifted garden.

Hannibal crunches back along the path. Breathing out ghosts.

He kneels on the kitchen floor to pick burrs of ice from Sandy's fur.

"Conn, c'mere." Perkunas gets a cursory swipe with a towel, so that Will can carry on stealing cloudberry preserves from a jar, leaning against the counter-top in his socks and blanket.

He licks the spoon, looking down.

"So."

"I apologise for the lack of a celebratory meal."

"Don't." Will is rosy, and present, and extraordinarily beautiful. "Considering the *why* of that particular failure."

His mouth is sticky in the low, sweet light.

He has to repeat himself. And nudge Hannibal with his unsprained foot.

"I said; *dessert seems salvageable*."

Hannibal blinks.

"Bring in that cauldron of spiced stuff too, when you're done being bewitched," Will adds, seemingly amused, and pleased. "I've already seen to the fire."

The dogs lie, spoiled, in toyland.

Hannibal undresses and sets steel back to the beginning of the record.

Inspector Linna has had his brother autograph the cover, an exclusive pressing of Ante's signature piece. And Hannibal's favourite Zimmermann concerto.

Will picks at the crimping of blood along his shin.

On the hearth, wine vapour warms and rises as the notes of the cello climb.

They drink. Eat some of the rescued rice pudding. Drink more.

Kiss.

"Ok." Will shifts, carefully, and reaches off to one side. "Know we agreed not to. But, I did."

There is an envelope, long and slender, pushed into Hannibal's thawed hands. It is decorated with an engraving of an antique interior. Shelves and ladders and a hundred spines.

"A…book token?"

"You like books."

Hannibal cannot deny this truth.

"It is a very thoughtful gift, Will. Thank you."

They kiss again, and Will tells Hannibal that he tastes of all their mornings, past and future, dawns of delights to come, and the kissing becomes fingering, lazy strummings and sustains that soon layer and build until they are almost fucking. Again. Just like that.

But not quite; breathless, Will winces, a little dizzy, a little raw.

Hannibal slides off him.

"I am beginning to wonder whether we will ever complete a conversation again."

"Not if you keep up that biting thing." Will yawns and rubs his neck. "And, you know, *nipples*."

The stiff, creamy envelope is crumpled. Hannibal takes out the contents to smooth them, idly, against his thigh.

"Will?"

"Uh?" Will is running his knuckles from bone to bone, scar to scar.

"This certificate is only valid for the bookstore attached to the Jakobsberg Monastery library."

“Yeah.”

“It has to be redeemed in person.”

“Well...”

Hannibal stares. “You intend for us to go there?”

“Some day?” Will shrugs. “I know that you want to drool all over their medical archives. Buy a postcard? You must have mentioned it a dozen times since I’ve known you.”

Hannibal sharpens the stare into something specific.

“We really ought to get some sleep.” Will lowers his eyes, otherwise what happens next will hurt. He wants that hurt, wants everything, wants it tender or bloody, wants to be needled and spun, but it must also be said that they are no longer young men.

And he cannot help but also desire to be upstairs, in their handsome bed, enfolded by skin and sheets and storm.

“There’s a weather warning for the next few days. Tomorrow we should check we have what it takes to hunker down. Water pump insulator could do with re-sealing.”

“As you wish. But first, I too am guilty of breaking our accord.”

Hannibal passes Will the package just as it came in the mail; wrapped in clear plastic. It is cigar-shaped, and the logo is a commonplace, woodsy one that will has known his whole life.

Will squints.

“A…torch? On a head-band?”

“I have observed that you enjoy…” Hannibal refrains from using certain words. “… mechanical repair work. This will facilitate your continued dismantling of all the engines on the island.”

“Uh. Yeah. It’s…great.”

Hannibal turns to set the fireguard up. Clear away the dishes. Wind the clocks.

“You are disappointed. Were you expecting something less practical? A metaphor made manifest? The beating heart of a rival?”

Will flicks the switch.

Off. On.

Antony Linna’s bow saws savagely, illuminating new wounds.

“Perhaps a certain part of me…enjoyed your more…extreme attentions.” He frowns down at the garish strapping. “I don’t think I’ve ever made that plain. Even to myself. And I should

have. How much I wanted to reciprocate. Always. To be a match for you, gesture for gesture."

Hannibal pauses. "Would it help, then, if I told you that since we attended the Santa Lucia procession, I have dreamed about your countenance, that evening. The lustre of your eyes. Candle-lit and transported." He straightens a pinecone on the mantlepiece. "I would forever encircle your brow with light, Will. The rapture of saints is a shabby thing, compared to seeing you experience something for the first time."

"So." Will swallows, his soreness sanctified. "You bought me this instead of setting my head on fire?"

"Less…mundane symbolism has not always been welcomed."

Will steps close to hold Hannibal, so sharply that Perkunas tweaks up his ears. "Fuck. This. You. It's…" His bruises sing into the embrace, but what is blue and black, compared to gold and red? "Can you give me one more thing?"

"Anything."

"To go with my flaming crown. Can I have what I want?"

"Anything." Hannibal repeats, this time indistinctly, from a hollow, a dip.

"Ok." Will backs them up to the gramophone stand. "Ok." He scrapes the stylus off and picks the record up from the turntable and slowly smashes it to pieces on the corner of the sideboard.

"Then tell that fucking cop that your husband prefers Elgar. That he prefers to be the one to provide you with nice things."

Will's voice is one of ownership. Hannibal remains unable to move. Will sheds shards of vinyl onto the floor, shiny black ice shattered into silence.

And Hannibal takes Will's empty hand and pulls it, roughly, onto his cock.

"You know," Will murmurs as he floors them, "when I first saw my Christmas present, so long and pretty, for a second there I thought you'd got me something more…intimate."

Hannibal reacts favourably.

"I am sure that something more stimulating than a head-torch could be obtained by mail-order."

"Well, I wasn't thinking of asking Ernesta what she had in stock. Maybe you should get the tablet out, later? We could go…shopping?"

And the fire is given the correct kindling, to be coaxed back to fervour. And the sea comes out of the beached wood in crests of blue, and honey.

And Will wonders what gifts they might yet exchange, come St Valentine’s Day.

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